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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001377

SIPDIS

LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: RULING COALITION PARTIES REACT TO RPP CONGRESS

REF: DJIBOUTI 1356

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) In the days after the ruling party, People's Rally for Progress (RPP), held their conference nominating current President Ismail Omar Guelleh as the party's choice for presidential candidate in the 2005 elections, word of discontent from the ruling coalition partners started to surface. Some Majority Union for Peace (UMP), the ruling coalition comprised of RPP, Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), Popular Party for Social Democracy (PPDS) and National Democratic Party (PND), party representatives are apparently feeling cheated by Guelleh and the RPP holding a single party congress.

12. (C) Word on the street reports that a UMP meeting one month prior to the RPP congress was held in order to determine a plan of action for the upcoming campaign season. It is said that in this meeting the four parties agreed to hold a joint congress to nominate the coalition candidate for the 2005 election. PPDS and FRUD members say the leadership was surprised to hear Guelleh and RPP had decided to hold a unilateral congress. The party leadership also feels bruised egos from Guelleh's call on the second day of the RPP congress for the other three parties in the UMP coalition to meet and adopt a joint position, something that was reportedly formulated and decided upon one month prior in the UMP meeting. The general thought is Guelleh wanted to reassert his party's status as the sole party that really gathers and rallies the masses.

13. (C) For the PPDS, two major personalities appear to be leading the party, both of which are reportedly feeling cheated and mistreated by the RPP. Moumin Bahdon, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Boulaleh Barreh, former Minister of Interior, are the driving force in PPDS and both carry significant political and tribal weight. Bahdon and Barreh are both of Issa origin but come from the two major sub-clans that oppose the Mamassan sub-clan (Guelleh's sub-clan of origin). The two reportedly intend to "show their muscles" in the months before the election, knowing that it would show the danger of collapse in Guelleh's coalition. The idea of the appearance of a weak coalition and slight political disturbances is likely not to reflect well on the external image of Djibouti. This occurrence would be contrary to everything Guelleh has worked to portray over the course of his tenure as President. Rumors have it that PPDS may use this tactic as a bargaining chip with Guelleh in order to up their profile in government from just a Ministerial level to a higher level in the Administration and security forces. (Note: It has been said that this last request may be because Bahdon had militia that was discreetly integrated into the Army beginning this year. End Note.) Contacts within the PPDS also mention that the party has the beginnings of a generational conflict between "the rising generation" and "the old dinosaurs."

14. (C) The FRUD leadership is rumored to believe that the RPP has "misbehaved" and demands reparation. FRUD already holds one ministerial position and 13 parliamentary seats. FRUD has seen a sudden increase in young Issa membership. Some believe this is in order to better portray itself as a national party and further remove itself from the Afar rebellion roots that created it. (Note: FRUD was one of the Afar parties that rebelled in the early nineties, which started the country's civil war. At the time of the peace accords in 1995, a portion of FRUD leadership joined the government and the rest remained in armed rebellion until the peace accords in 2001. The latter faction of FRUD, headed by Ahmed Dini Ahmed, is now the opposition party Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD). End Note.)

15. (C) The PND, headed by Aden Robleh Awaleh, has become the suspicious party in the coalition. Awaleh's fax, read the day of the RPP's announcement of Guelleh as their candidate, has apparently surprised the two other coalition members as much as, some say, high-ups in his own party. Opponents of Awaleh are suspect of his actions and say that he had curried great favor with Guelleh. Also it is said that his appointment to the Parliament of the African Union in Johannesburg is a reward from Guelleh and he is using it as an opportunity to

create business connections for himself and Guelleh.

16. (C) On the part of the RPP, it now appears that Guelleh is more at ease following the death of Ahmed Dini Ahmed, leader of ARD. Dini's presence has been a strong counter-balance to Guelleh in the past. Guelleh is said to be in good shape politically and is untroubled by Dini's successor, Ahmed Youssouf, because Youssouf is not very active or charismatic. Guelleh is said to be taking the attitude that there is no large threat to his position and that the other parties of the coalition should stay in the background and wait for his gifts.

17. (C) Comment: Post cannot accurately comment on how much of the above rumor is truth. The majority of it is reported through party members or word on the street. We will continue to keep close watch on both ruling party and opposition activities leading up to the election in 2005. These rumors and reports from within the parties could indicate that everything is not completely calm on either side of the Djiboutian political fence.
RAGSDALE